



Project XL: United Egg Producers



WHAT IS



PROJECT XL?

Project XL, which stands for “eXcellence and Leadership,” is a national initiative that tests innovative ways of achieving better and more cost-effective public health and environmental protection. The information and lessons learned from Project XL are being used to assist the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in redesigning its current regulatory and policy-setting approaches. Project XL encourages testing of cleaner, cheaper, and smarter ways to attain environmental results superior to those achieved under current regulations and policies, in conjunction with greater accountability to stakeholders. It is vital that each project tests new ideas with the potential for wide application and broad environmental benefits. As of October 2000, over forty pilot experiments are being implemented and several additional projects are in various stages of development.

SUMMARY OF THE UNITED EGG PRODUCERS PROJECT

Through this XL project, the United Egg Producers (UEP), a farmer cooperative that represents egg producers nationwide, has entered into an agreement with EPA to provide a comprehensive program to help participating egg-producing facilities achieve superior environmental performance by implementing an environmental management system (EMS) and complying with the terms of a general permit issued by individual states or EPA. This more comprehensive approach will require participating facilities to comply not only with the terms of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit, but also to implement a multi-media EMS that controls a range of significant environmental impacts, including those not subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The project also includes a third-party auditing component and on-farm management practices most likely to result in superior environmental performance. Each facility's EMS will be required to pass the independent third-party audit before the facility can apply for coverage under a general permit. Information on audit results will be provided to the appropriate regulatory authorities and will be available to local stakeholders. Ongoing audits will be conducted to ensure continuing implementation of the EMS, and audit results will be available to the public. This XL project, EPA's 48th, was signed on October 25, 2000.

SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

This innovative project is expected to achieve superior environmental results, because egg producers will be subject to an innovative, comprehensive program. This project will bring egg-producing facilities under NPDES permits faster and help assure continuing compliance and superior environmental performance through the implementation of EMSs. UEP also will help organize a third-party manure user program designed to help recipients of manure understand how to develop nutrient management plans and use manure from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) properly.

FLEXIBILITY

Most egg-producing operations use dry manure storage and handling procedures, which generally are not covered under existing CWA regulations for CAFOs. EPA is in the process of revising these regulations, but these revisions will not become final until 2003. This XL project allows these facilities to obtain permit coverage under a less costly and complex mechanism--i.e., a general permit and an EMS-based program, tailored to the needs of the egg-laying industry--as an incentive for the industry's large producers to maintain environmentally superior facilities and practices. Facilities that do not continue to comply with their general permit or do not adequately implement their EMS could be required to obtain individual NPDES permits.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

This project was developed by a workgroup comprised of EPA, UEP members, several states, non-governmental organizations, and USDA. All aspects of the program have been reviewed thoroughly and are supported by all participants. Ultimately, however, it will be up to the individual states to support the program by making general permits available to qualifying facilities. UEP will work closely with states that have egg producers to inform them about the program and encourage them to participate.

APPROACHES TO BE TESTED

Will an innovative approach to address environmental issues with egg producers using NPDES general permits and environmental management systems result in better environmental performance at participating facilities?

CONTACTS

EPA Office of Water	Jim Horne	(202) 260-5802
EPA/XL HQ	Lisa Reiter	(202) 260-9041
Project Sponsor, Capitolink LLC	John Thorne	(202) 872-3865

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More information about this XL project, or Project XL is available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/ProjectXL>, or via the Project XL information line at 202-260-5754.